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ABSTRACT

This book proposes a new, multidisciplinary theory for explaining and predicting current and future patterns of women's choice between employment and family work. Chapters 1 and 2 present main tenets of preference theory and explain the need for the theory. Chapters 3 through 8 elaborate four principal tenets of preference theory. Chapter 3 identifies five historical changes producing a qualitatively new scenario for women in prosperous societies in the 21st century. Chapter 4 looks at polarization of sex-role preferences and behavior. Chapter 5 looks at the same topics to see if younger generations display less polarization and then considers whether longitudinal studies reveal stability of work-lifestyle preferences across life history. Chapter 6 sets out principal differences among three preference groups (home-centered, adaptive, and work-centered); considers sources of differences; explores contextual constraints; and outlines consequences for differential policy-responsiveness. Chapter 7 reviews research evidence on marriage markets, especially how women use them as avenues for marital mobility and alternative "career ladders" to labor markets. Chapter 8 considers national and international governmental fiscal and social policies, identifying those that support each preference group, and family-friendly policies developed by employers and trade unions to see whether they are, or could be, designed to offer benefits to all groups. Chapter 9 offers a preliminary outline of how the theory applies to men. Chapter 10 summarizes results, suggests the theory offers a new perspective on theoretical and research puzzles, and argues for a new approach to cross-national comparisons of women's employment. An author index and a subject index are also included. (Contains 744 references and 31 tables.) (YLB)

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